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Research Article

**SELF MEDICATION PRACTICES AMONG STUDENTS OF  
POONCH MEDICAL COLLEGE RAWALAKOT AJ&K**<sup>1</sup>Dr. Fizza Shafiq, <sup>2</sup>Dr. Muhammad Ameer Moavia, <sup>3</sup>Dr. Ishtiaq Ahmad<sup>1</sup>Div. HQ Teaching Hospital Mirpur, AJ&K<sup>2</sup>Aziz Fatimah Medical and Dental College Faisalabad<sup>3</sup>Punjab Medical College Faisalabad**Abstract:***Objective:* To assess knowledge, to investigate causes of self-medication, to measure prevalence.*Materials and Methods:* Setting: Poonch Medical College Rawalakot.*Duration of study:* 2 months after approval of synopsis.*Study Design:* Descriptive cross sectional study.*Sampling Technique:* Convenient sampling.*Sample size:* Students from 1<sup>st</sup> year to 4<sup>th</sup> year, no inclusion or exclusion criteria. (120 students).*Data collection tool/procedure:* Data will be collected by distributing objective based closed and open ended questionnaires which the students will fill.*Data Analysis plan:* Data will be entered and analyzed manually in calculator.*Result:* Astonishingly the prevalence of self medication among the PMC students is 100%. No difference among the Males /Females. Day scholars or boarders.*Conclusion:* Most of the students are habitual medicine takers.**Keywords:** Self Medication, Medical Students.**Corresponding author:****Dr. Fizza Shafiq,**

Div. HQ Teaching Hospital,

Mirpur, AJ&amp;K

QR code



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## INTRODUCTION

Self medication is the selection and use of medicines by individuals to treat self-recognized illnesses or symptoms. For the purpose of this definition, (1) medicines include herbal and traditional products. Thus, Self-medication is a human behavior in which an individual uses a substance to treat physical or psychological ailments. The most widely self-medicated substances are over-the-counter drugs used to treat common health issues at home, as well as dietary supplements (2) These don't require a doctor's prescription to obtain. This is the practice whereby individuals treat their ailments and conditions with medicines which are approved and available without prescription, and (3) which are safe and effective when used as directed. Self-medication is an integral part of self care, defined as the primary health resource in health care system involving self medication, non drug self treatment, social support in illness and first aid in everyday life (4)

But Self-medication differs from self-care in that it involves drugs that may do good or cause harm. As long as the awareness with the media (electronics and print) is increasing, the prevalence of self medication is increasing to an alarming level especially in youth. (5) This raises concerns of incorrect self-diagnosis, drug interaction, and use of drugs other than for the original indication (6) Self-medication is also prevalent among the practicing physicians and students (7) There is paucity of literature on the prevalence of self-medication among medical students and their attitude towards the same. (8)

It's a known fact that people are self administering a variable number Of medications that include class i.e. SEDATIVES, ANTI-PYRETICS, ANTI-BIOTICS, ANTIMALARIALS.

In 2008, there was a survey conducted among the University students of Karachi (Medical & Non-medical) prevalence of self-medication was 76% No significant differences btw the self medication practices of medical and non medical students. According to that survey the most prevalent factor that triggered self medication was "PREVIOUS EXPERIENCE" 50%. (9)

Studies have revealed the burden of self-medication with antibiotics to be higher in developing than developed countries.

In a study conducted among the civilians of Karachi, astonishingly the prevalence of self medication was 84.8%. Predominantly the medications were painkillers 28.8%, Anti-pyretics

19.8% (10) The prevalence is high all over the world 68% in European countries. (11) While much high in developing countries with rates as high as 92% in adolescents of Kuwait. (12) Our neighboring countries have prevalence rates 31% in India. 59% in Nepal Few studies in Pakistan with prevalence around 51%. (13)

The present study is hence, conducted to assess the prevalence of self-medication among the undergraduate students of PMC-Rawalakot

## Operational definitions

**Self-medication:** Self-medication is a human behaviour in which an individual uses a substance or any exogenous influence to self-administer treatment for physical or psychological ailments.

**Knowledge:** awareness or familiarity gained by experience of a fact or situation.

**Practice:** the customary, habitual, or expected procedure or way of doing something.

## RESEARCH METHODOLOGY:

Study design: Descriptive Cross Sectional Study

Settings: Poonch Medical College Rawalakot.

Duration of Study: 2 months after approval of synopsis.

Sample Size: Students from 1<sup>st</sup> year to 4<sup>th</sup> year, no inclusion or exclusion criteria. (120 students).

Sampling Technique: Convenient sampling.

Data collection tool/procedure: Mixed Questionnaire.

Data Analysis plan: Data will be entered and analysed in SPSS version 20, along with manual calculator.

## RESULTS:

Astonishingly the prevalence of self medication among the PMC students is 100%.

No difference among the Males /Females. Day scholars or boarders.

Out of 120 students, 73 responded 41 females and 32 Males

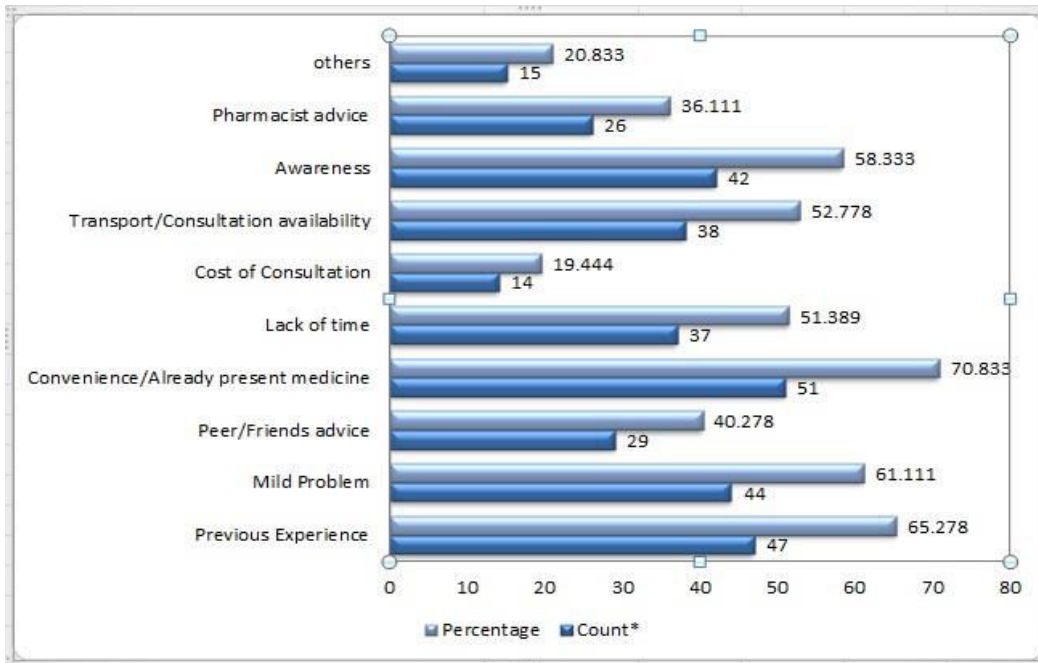
No of responders

**Perceived Reasons for Self Medication** Graphic representation of perceived reasons for self medication

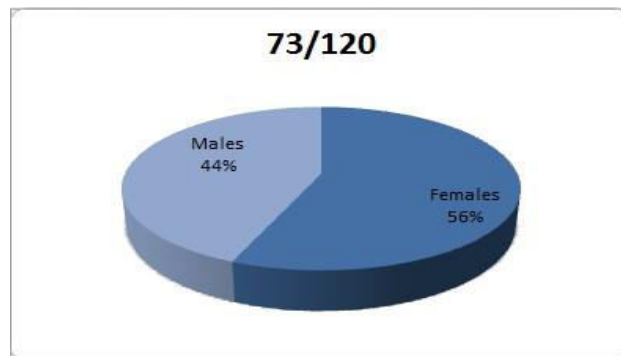
This graph shows the perceived reasons for self medication ,their percentages and prevalence rates.

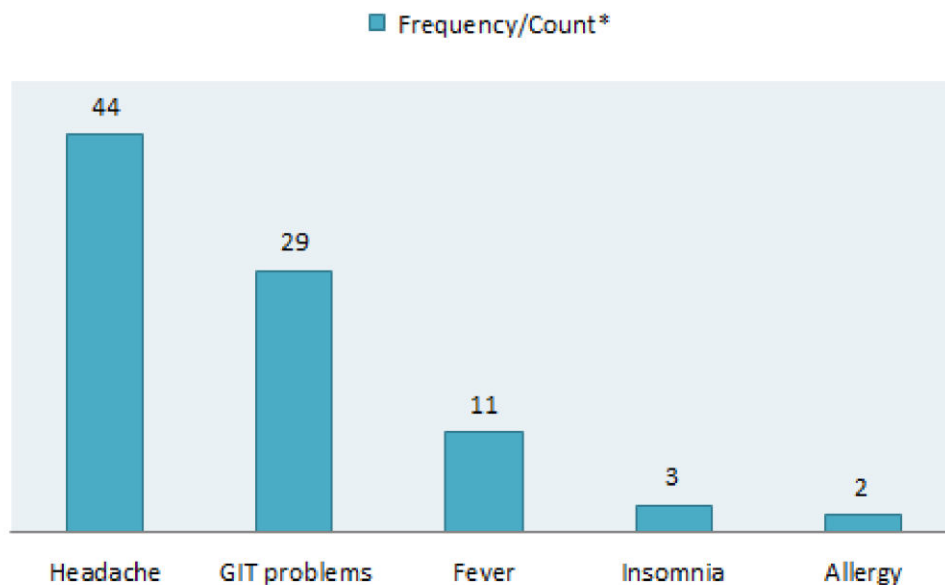
Column1	Perceived Reasons for Self Medication	Column2
Factors	Count*	Percentage
Previous Experience	47	65.278
Mild Problem	44	61.111
Peer/Friends advice	29	40.278
Convenience/Already present medicine	51	70.833
Lack of time	37	51.389
Cost of Consultation	14	19.444
Transport/Consultation availability	38	52.778
Awareness	42	58.333
Pharmacist advice	26	36.111
others	15	20.833

\*Multiple responses total doesn't add upto 100%



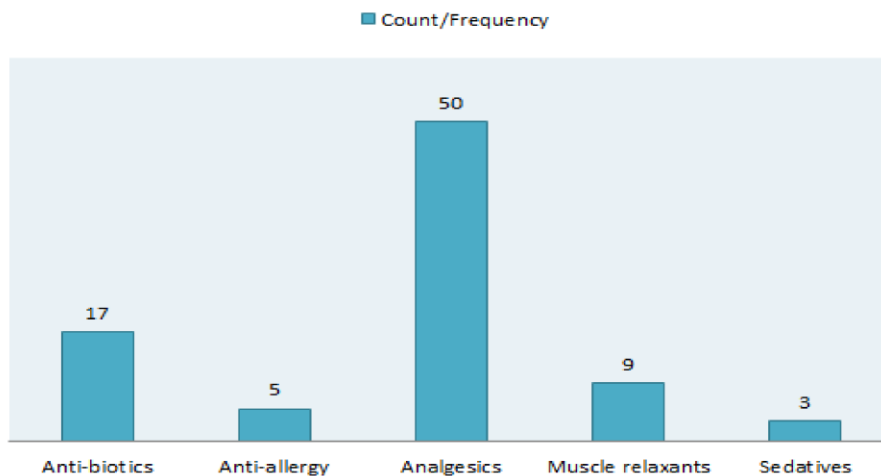
**Graphic representation of prevalent symptoms and diseases**





The graph shows the count for various symptoms and diseases for which self-medication was done. Among all these Headache is most common and prevalent then GIT problems( i.e. diarrhea, vomiting and nausea), Fever, Insomnia and Allergies.

#### Graphic representation of frequency of drugs



Above graph shows that the class of drug most commonly used is Analgesic, then comes Antibiotics, Muscle relaxants, Anti-allergy and Sedatives.

#### DISCUSSION:

Self-medication can be defined as obtaining and consuming drug(s) without the advice of a physician either for diagnosis, prescription or surveillance of treatment. Self-medication is done to relieve symptoms including headache, myalgia, stomachache

and fever etc.

The hazards of self medication include the following: Poisoning, Allergy, Habituation, Addiction, Other adverse reactions like renal, gastric and CVS problems.

This study was conducted to assess knowledge, investigate causes and measure prevalence of

self-medication in students of Poonch Medical College Rawalakot.

These findings are consistent with those reported in most previous studies of similar nature .

A study conducted in Agha Khan University, Karachi showed similar results with my study that mostly analgesics are used for self medication .It also shows that most people self medicate for fever, flue and headache which is also consistent with my study .But this study is conducted on bigger sample.

Even a survey among rural dwellers of Karachi is high as 85% of self practiced medicines.

While my findings are relevant ,they should be interpreted in light of some limitations for future directions due to paucity of time I was bound to conduct a descriptive research and hence I can't generalize the result .My sample size was small ,I was unable to correlate it with other effecting variables like amount of medicine used etc. These limitations should be kept in mind when conducting further researches in this area.

### CONCLUSION:

Conclusion of my study was:

- 1- Most of the students are habitual medicine taker.
- 2- Reasons for self medication include convenience, previous experience.
- 3-Most of the students are well aware of the use and actions of drugs.

### Limitations:

- 1-I had insufficient resources and manpower for the research.
- 2-Sample size was not enough to represent the whole community.
- 3-Number of responders was not adequate.
- 4-A convenience sampling technique was used and not probability sampling so the sample has fewer representatives.

### Recommendations:

- 1-The Government should keep check on the sale of OTC's (Over The Counter Drugs) as the excessive , inadequate or improper intake of antibiotics renders the micro-organisms more resistant towards a number a drugs .

2-OTC's also result in number of allergic reactions , Anaphylactic shocks etc. e.g.

Penicillins, Cephalosporins etc.

3-Increased usage of analgesics leading to vital organs damage i.e. renal shut down, centrilobular carcinoma liver.

4-Government should conduct awareness programs to brief people about the hazards of self medication.

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